



## loved ones by Val-Creative

**Category:** Stranger Things, 2016

**Genre:** Angst, Family

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Jonathan B., Will B.

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2019-08-04 16:55:33

**Updated:** 2019-08-04 16:55:33

**Packaged:** 2019-12-12 16:57:43

**Rating:** K+

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 676

**Publisher:** [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

**Summary:** Jonathan remembers that Will must have been ten or eleven when they built Castle Byers. Took them hours, days. And now he stands at the ruins of it, wondering how much pain Will truly is in.

## loved ones

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Jonathan remembers that Will must have been ten or eleven when they built Castle Byers. Took them hours, *days*.

It withstood Mom's divorce, and the harsh winters, and even Will's disappearance and possession. Wood-planks rotted. Rainwater seeped through the blankets and towels. There was never enough batteries for the portable lamp. But it stood tall.

He wades through the ruins of Castle Byers now, silently and grimly taking in the sight of broken branches. They'll need to be finishing up packing for the moving truck arriving tomorrow morning. Jonathan's eyes drift to Will's silver-aluminum bat lying in the rubble, as if someone removed it from Will's fort before the collapse, and then tossed it aside.

Will keeps his distance behind Jonathan, grasping and twisting the handles of his bicycle. It's pretty obvious who *someone* is.

"Must have been a hell of a storm," Jonathan mutters. He's not gonna be the one to bring it up. "Took this all out."

His little brother says nothing, frowning deeply and watching as Jonathan inspects the interior of Castle Byers for anything salvageable. Most of Will's Dungeon and Dragons books and papers seem fine, if not soggy around the edges. Jonathan picks up what remains of Will's photographs. "This got all shredded up," he announces, climbing out and showing Will.

"Yeah..." Will trails off. His knuckles whitening. "The, *uh...* the storm," he adds lamely.

Jonathan marches over to him, crouching down.

"I know you probably don't wanna talk about it, but how are you gonna feel when your friends aren't around? And you didn't say

goodbye to them first?" He can't seem to change Will's mind about it. "I think you'll regret it," Jonathan says, flipping through the torn pictures. "I think you'll especially regret not saying anything to Mike."

"He wouldn't notice," Will mumbles, looking away. "Mike's too busy with El."

"And that makes you jealous."

Will's cheeks heat up, darkening red.

"No..."

Jonathan shakes his head, chuckling and touching Will's shoulder benevolently. "Will, it's okay you like him," he reminds him. "Believe me, I know. It's been like that since you were snot-nose little kids. Nobody could separate you two."

It's a little bit of a tragedy seeing Mike and Will at odds. Best friends since kindergarten. Will's first friend and Mike's first friend being Will. Will was always the first one at Mike's place for Game Night, and always the last to leave or he would beg on the Wheeler's phone to sleepover - no matter how many times this got Will into trouble with their mom and Jonathan.

They're leaving Hawkins for good, and Jonathan can sense the struggle in Will — to accept it or reject Mike before it was too late. Just to avoid getting *hurt* some more. "Tell him," Jonathan says encouragingly. "Tell him the truth, Will."

One of Will's hand rises sluggishly, wiping under his eye.

"I dunno..."

"We got a long car ride ahead. Think about it." Jonathan stands up, smiling thinly and hugging his brother, "Love you, okay?"

He feels Will nod against his arm.

Mom calls over Nancy and the rest of the kids to help the packing, and Jonathan can only glimpse Will from the sidelines, as he sobs his heart out and clutches onto every single friend Will made in his

hometown. It's the *right* thing to do.

Jonathan is proud of him.

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*Stranger Things* isn't mine. Requested by ottermo (AO3): "Jonathan and Will, maybe Jonathan finding out about Castle Byers being no more, Jonathan knowing Will likes boys/Mike Wheeler." I kinda linked it as a prequel to "days belonging to us" BUT THAT IS NOT OFFICIALLY MY STANCE. AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO READ IT AFTER READING THIS. But just a fun tidbit for ya. Hope you like it and everyone else and any thoughts/comments are so so so appreciated!